

It is right, appropriate, and entirely normal that our need to raise the debt limit would be paired with negotiations regarding Democrats' runaway printing and spending.

The American people changed control of the House because the voters wanted to constrain Democrats' runaway, reckless, party-line spending. The voters of this country looked at the trillions of dollars of party-line spending, the runaway inflation, and the mountain of debt, and last November they hit the brakes.

We just experienced 2 years when Washington Democrats got to set policy without negotiating, and the American people put an end to it.

Some Democrats are trying to rewrite history and pretend that Republican demands for negotiations are unusual, but that, of course, is just false.

Back in 2017, the Senate Democratic leader said the debt ceiling gave Democrats "leverage" in broader talks. As the New York Times explained back in 2017, then-Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader "began formulating a plan to apply pressure, jettisoning the idea of backing a straightforward or 'clean' debt limit measure . . . as a way to gain muscle in coming negotiations." That was the Pelosi-Schumer playbook for the debt limit: Demand negotiations.

Here is how the Democratic leader put it himself at the time. He said the debt ceiling "gives another ample opportunity for bipartisanship, not for one party jamming its choices down the throats of the other."

So I trust Democrats will be consistent with their past positions and the White House will waste no time beginning the customary bipartisan negotiations with the new Republican majority over in the House. The President of the United States does not get to walk away from the table.

The same President who happily signed off on trillions of dollars of needless party-line spending needs to begin good-faith negotiations on spending reform with Speaker MCCARTHY and do it today.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a related matter, there are lots of egregious ways that President Biden has wasted taxpayer money trying to buy up his low approval ratings, but the Democrats' proposal for student loan socialism is really one of the worst.

It is like the Democrats paid scientists in a lab to invent the most unfair government handout that could possibly, possibly exist. Democrats want to take the graduate school loans of doctors and lawyers and white-collar professionals making six figures and put their debt on the shoulders of Americans who didn't take out loans at all.

To the middle-class families who saved, sacrificed, and skipped vaca-

tions to pay for more of their kids' college, the Democrats want to turn you into suckers.

To the plumbers, firefighters, check-out clerks, and auto mechanics who made career choices to avoid taking on debt, the Democrats think dentists and the lawyers deserve extra handouts at your expense.

To the patriots who volunteered to serve our Nation in uniform as part of a plan to attend college debt-free, the Democrats want to change the rules behind your back.

President Biden and his party wake up every day looking for ways to transfer money and power away from the working class toward elites. But even for today's Democratic Party, this one is especially galling.

This is "reverse Robin Hood" policy: Democrats stealing from the working class to reward people who are comparatively better off. It just isn't fair on a personal level. It is also staggeringly reckless fiscal policy.

Remember, this whole undertaking was first set up as a short-term emergency measure at the very start of COVID—those earliest weeks when the entire economy seemed to be in a free fall. That was almost 3 years ago.

Shortly afterward, thanks to the bipartisan CARES Act that came out of the Republican-led Senate, the economy rebounded. Household savings actually went up. Many white-collar professionals spent months, if not years, working remotely from the comfort of their living rooms. Any legitimate reason for pausing loan payments evaporated just a few months after it began, but the Democrats have kept it going, year after year. Now they want to magically wave away people's debts altogether. Needless to say, this would be enormously expensive for the country.

If you add up the cost of three things: the nearly 3-year-long "pause" thus far, the mass jubilee the Biden administration is trying to defend in court, and the Democrats' proposal to turn the income-driven payment program into permanent socialism, the total cost of these three measures is projected to hit \$1 trillion—\$1 trillion.

This estimate is from our colleague Senator CASSIDY, who is shining a bright spotlight on these terrible policies as the incoming ranking member of the HELP Committee.

On top of all the reckless inflationary spending the Democrats have pushed through, they want to redistribute up to another trillion dollars away from working-class Americans toward college-educated people who already earn higher salaries on average.

The Democrats want to squeeze even more money out of cashiers, welders, first responders, janitors, and cosmetologists and send it to a group of people who already outearn those people on an average basis—more reckless spending, more debt inflation, and no fairness for American families.

BURMA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, finally, today marks a solemn anniversary for the people of Burma and for all of us around the world who spent years—literally years—rooting for them to make progress toward greater freedom and democracy. Two years ago, their hopes of a stable democracy were wrenched away by a brutal military coup.

To date, this takeover by the Tatmadaw, which is their army, has displaced 1.2 million people, including many thousands who have been forced to flee the country altogether.

Inside Burma, more than 16,000 people have been taken as political prisoners. At one point, the military was detaining American journalist Danny Fenster and Nathan Maung; the Australian economist, Sean Turnell; dozens of innocent children; and, of course, my friend Aung San Suu Kyi, whose latest conviction and a sham trial leaves her facing the possibility of life in prison.

Expert observers count the coup's death toll at 19,000. That includes people this illegitimate government simply executed outright, like the activists Ko Jimmy and Phyo Zeya Thaw.

Now the leaders of the Tatmadaw coup are laying out plans in broad daylight to stamp out Burma's pro-democracy movement once and for all. The military is shedding any last ounce of legitimacy it pretended to have and is now conducting airstrikes against innocent civilians.

The junta's new regulations for this year's election are designed to make viable opposition virtually impossible. No wonder the illegitimate Tatmadaw rulers rolled out the red carpet for Putin's Foreign Minister to visit Burma. Thugs recognize other thugs.

On the second anniversary of the coup, with a potentially devastating sham election on the horizon, it is absolutely vital that the United States continue our assistance to the National Unity Government and other key groups working inside Burma to protect the innocent and advance the cause of democracy and increase cross-border humanitarian aid. By our example, America should rally our partners to raise the international stakes for the Tatmadaw's continued brutality.

In December, the National Defense Authorization Act instructed the Biden administration to take several more concrete steps to bulk up American support for the people of Burma. It made sanctions on senior junta officials mandatory. It required more targeted and precisely timed sanctions against state-owned enterprises like MOGE, M-O-G-E. Finally, the NDAA also notably authorized funding for programs to strengthen federalism in and among ethnic states in Burma and for technical support and nonlethal assistance to Burma's ethnic armed organizations and People's Defence Forces to strengthen communication, command and control, and coordination of